

Episode 1x22:
"THOSE LEFT BEHIND"

Written by George Krubski

Based on a story by Joss Whedon and Brett Matthews

Edited by Lisa Garvin and Shawn Morris

Producer: David Elmer
Head Writer: George W. Krubski
Art Director: Sean Young

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EXT. WHITEFALL – DAY – ESTABLISHING

A ghost town, little more than a small complex of RAMSHACKLE BUILDINGS, sits in a field of dust and scrub.

EXT. WHITEFALL – EDGE OF TOWN – DAY

The two BLUE HANDS stand in the dust in front of one of the buildings. A BULLET hits the ground at their feet.

BLUE HAND#2
We appreciate the warning shot…

The Blue Hands look in the direction the shot came from.

BLUE HAND#2 (cont'd)
Agent Dobson.

LAWRENCE DOBSON stands on one of the buildings, looking down, a sniper rifle in his hands. He's mangy and tattered, worse-for-the-wear, with a bulky, ugly CYBERNETIC DEVICE covering his right eye and part of his face.

DOBSON
Don't. My depth perception's not exactly what it used to be.

BLUE HAND#1
You invited us here.

DOBSON
Didn't invite you to kill my men.

In the background, the SENTRY, injured by the Blue Hands at the end of the previous episode, coughs.

BLUE HAND#2
What exactly is it you want?

DOBSON
Same as you gentlemen.
(beat)
Serenity.

INT. WHITEFALL – WORKSHOP – DAY

The three-story workshop is a converted warehouse. A half-dozen FOLKS bustle about, mostly around THE TICK, a space vehicle slightly smaller than one of Serenity's shuttles.

The Tick is all engine, with a small two-man cockpit grafted on. The roof of the cockpit is taken up by a bizarre-looking AIRLOCK/RAMMING DEVICE that looks like it would be used to force its way through another ship's airlock.

The rest of the workshop is filled with cots, arms lockers, tables, and workbenches. There are more than a few drawings or blueprints of Firefly-class vessels.

Dobson and the Blue Hands approach the Tick. Dobson trips over a tool, but catches himself.

BLUE HAND#1
Impressive.

RENNER (OS)
Thank you.

RENNER joins them. He's a squat little troll of a man, legless below the knees, seated in a powered WHEELCHAIR that seems closer to a one-man mule. The man is covered in grease, and the vehicle is covered with tools.

DOBSON
Renner here's the one who came up with the solution I needed.

RENNER
Just want to make sure those bastards pay for what they done.

Renner nods to the Blue Hands and rolls toward the Tick, joining the folk who are working on its underside.

DOBSON
He's also the one who put me back together.
(touches his cybernetic eye)
Lost his wife when Reynolds brought the Reavers to Whitefall.

Dobson indicates all those working on the Tick.

DOBSON (cont'd)
They've all lost something. Or someone.

BLUE HAND#1
It seems that Captain Reynolds has quite a collection of enemies.

Dobson doesn't need to say anything: he seethes with anger.

BLUE HAND#2
Find the ship, you find the man.

BLUE HAND#1
And we find River Tam.

DOBSON
Sounds simple enough, doesn't it?

BLUE HAND#1
If it were, we wouldn't be here.

The Blue Hands look around, taking in the workshop.

BLUE HAND#1 (cont'd)
You've clearly given this a great deal of thought.

BLUE HAND#2
You have the method. You have the men. You have the materials to make this happen.

BLUE HAND#1
What is it that you need from us?

DOBSON
Alliance access. Lost that when I lost my eye. I have the proper bait, can get Reynolds to go to it, but I need to know that there won't be interference.
(beat)
No one kills Reynolds but me.

The Blue Hands share a look.

BLUE HAND#2
How long?

DOBSON
You say the word, we can have them inside two weeks.

BLUE HAND#1
Two weeks? I believe we have a deal.

Dobson and Blue Hand#1 shake hands.



EXT. CONSTANCE – DAY – ESTABLISHING

Constance, a humble community of a few hundred, is nestled in the low-lying hills and bordered by a river.

EXT. CONSTANCE – CHURCH – DAY – ESTABLISHING

The small white church has a mix of horses and well-used vehicles parked outside. A few FOLKS enter the building.

INT. CONSTANCE – CHURCH – DAY

SHEPHERD BOOK stands at the front of the congregation. The church is a simple affair, looking almost like a schoolhouse on the inside. It contains eight rows of pews, filled by honest-looking, farmer-type FOLKS.

BOOK
And so I say to you on this fine day, citizens of Constance, that your lives are not defined by that with which you enter this world, but rather with what you leave behind.

INT. CONSTANCE – VAULT – SAME TIME

The vault is a tight room, perhaps half the size of Serenity's cargo bay. One wall contains a STAIRWELL and ELEVATOR, but the other three are lined with two rows of LOCKER DOORS. The interior of the room is a jumble of CRATES, BOXES, and BARRELS.

MAL REYNOLDS crouches in front of one of the lockers, a small BLOWTORCH-LIKE DEVICE in his hand. ZOE and JAYNE (his hands bandaged from last episode's injuries) are behind him, armed, standing guard.

BOOK (cont'd, VO)
Our lives, from the moment we are born to when we draw our last breath, are nothing more than a series of comings and goings.

Mal aims the device at the lock, and activates it. Smoke rises from the lock for a few beats, then Mal turns the device off and puts it down.

BOOK (cont'd, VO)
If we live our lives as we should, we give of ourselves with each entrance and exit.

Mal taps the still-smoking lock, yanking his fingers back as he burns them. As he puts his fingers in his mouth, the lock falls out.

BOOK (cont'd, VO)
If we don't…

Using the hole created by the recently vacated lock as a handle, Mal opens the locker door. Jayne leans in close.

BOOK (cont'd, VO)
…We take.

We don't see what Mal sees, but he smiles up at Zoe. She's looking across the room, however, toward the elevator and stairwell.

MAL
Well, now…

He reaches into the vault, grabbing a BAG OF COIN and a smaller ITEM, which he palms up his sleeve. Then, he stands, drawing his gun. Jayne, too, turns to face the elevator.

MAL (cont'd)
This is a situation.

The stairwell door is open, and four well-armed MERCS stand blocking the exits.

OTT is a well-dressed Asian man with a headset and facial tattoos. CLARENCE is a massive man in a bowler, vest, and filthy white t-shirt. GOWE is a scrawny raptor of a man with a number of scars and facial piercings. NICO, a surprisingly petite and pretty blonde, wears a revealing outfit that shows off her figure and the military tattoos on her shoulders.

All four are armed: Ott with a pistol, Clarence with a large gun, Gowe with a knife in one hand and a revolver in the other, and Nico with a monstrously large automatic weapon that envelops her left arm up to the elbow.

JAYNE
Really? And here I was thinking it was *ee da tuo da bien* <a big lump of feces>.

ZOE
Sir, it disturbs me that I'm inclined to agree with Jayne.

Mal and Ott's crews posture, aiming at each other in a Tarantino-style standoff.

MAL
Makes two of us.

OTT
Surrender the coin to me, Malcolm. Or, I can shoot you in the face. Your choice.

MAL
Don't suppose it matters to you, our being here first?

OTT
You suppose right, though I appreciate the preacher you brought along as a diversion. That was almost intelligent.

MAL
Yeah, I used to think so.

Nico, Gowe, and Jayne are all getting fidgety enough that it seems very likely violence will ensue.

OTT
Of course, that's how I knew when to hit you.

NICO
Can we move this along, Ott? I could spray them all down in a micro and we'll be off this miserable rock.

OTT
Yes, you could. It's your call, Malcolm.

JAYNE
C'mon, Mal, we can do this…
(indicates Gowe)
Starting with the freaky one. Too much coin at stake not to—

Mal glances to Zoe.

ZOE
I'll back you either way, sir.

OTT
Your decision, Mal…

Mal lowers his gun and tosses the bag of coin on the ground between the two groups.

JAYNE
But, Mal…

MAL
Stow it, Jayne.

Jayne and Zoe lower their weapons as Clarence lumbers forward to collect the bag.

OTT
I'll have the cash, Mal… and your gun. I've a thing for antiques.

MAL
This thing's going your way, Ott. Don't make it go another.

OTT
Your gun. Now.

Mal holds the gun by the barrel.

MAL
You know, this here got me through the war.

Significant look between Mal and Zoe.

MAL (cont'd)
It's one of only two things I can recall that did, and stuck with me afterwards.

Clarence is back next to Ott.

OTT
War's over, Mal.

MAL
Yeah. People keep saying that.

Clarence hands the coin to Ott. While Ott's focus is away, Mal FLINGS the gun, throwing it as hard as he can. It hits Ott in the face, drawing blood and knocking out a tooth.

OTT
Gut them! ALL OF THEM!

NICO
Hwoon dahn! <Bastards!>

As Nico opens fire with her massive weapon, Mal, Zoe and Jayne duck for cover behind crates.

JAYNE
(under breath)
I'll fix this *yao noo* <demon woman>.

Jayne pulls out a GRENADE, bites off the pin.

ZOE
Jayne, no! We're in a vault. The concussion alone'll kill us—

Jayne's standing, preparing to throw the grenade, when Gowe throws a knife into his arm. Jayne yelps in pain and drops the grenade. It rolls across the floor.

Mal sees the grenade, dives for it. Zoe gets there first.

ZOE
Can't let you do that, sir.

She throws the grenade into the locker they previously opened.

ZOE (cont'd)
Jayne, maybe. Not you.

Steve-McQueen cool, Zoe SHOOTS the door shut.

Jayne winces and covers his ears.

INT. CONSTANCE – CHURCH – SAME TIME

BOOK
And so I say to each of you, the time comes when you will have to make your decision. What to take from this world, and what to leave behind—

An ALARM sounds in the distance outside. Folks rush to the window, ignoring Book.

CITIZEN
(looking out the window)
It's coming from the bank!

INT. CONSTANCE – VAULT – SAME TIME

Mal, Zoe, and Jayne pick themselves up. The vault is filled with smoke and debris.

ZOE
They're getting away.

JAYNE
They're getting away with the money.

Ott and crew are in the elevator, door beginning to close. Ott stares at Mal.

MAL
They ain't there yet.

Mal rolls out into the room, grabs his discarded gun, and fires. Bullet hits the elevator door as it closes.

MAL
Kao! <So damned close!>

INT. CONSTANCE – CHURCH – SAME TIME

Book stands alone, at the front of an empty church.

Beat.

BOOK
Joo ah, nee ming ming jee dao wuh shr bang nee tzwo shr, yo huh bee jao wuh ma fan nuh? <Oh Lord, you clearly know I'm helping do your work, so why must there be so much trouble for me?>

EXT. CONSTANCE – BANK – DAY

The bank is a small building on a street of storefronts. The front door is open and smoke billows out. Jayne, Mal, and Zoe burst out, coughing and wiping their eyes.

ZOE
Get the datacard, sir?

Mal nods and coughs, produces a DATACARD from his sleeve.

JAYNE
What's it matter, if we didn't get the coin?

ZOE
Jayne's right, Captain. Card was the job, coin was the payment.

MAL
Badger'll see we get paid.

Zoe and Jayne exchange a look.

ZOE
Could be you got hired by a different Badger from the one me an' Jayne know.

Jayne wipes his nose and looks around.

JAYNE
Gonna take a while for the stink of this to pass.

ZOE
Just smoke, Jayne.

JAYNE
Weren't talking about no smoke.

Mal confronts Jayne.

MAL
Now ain't the time, Jayne. Understood?

JAYNE
You just be sure and say when.

Mal ignores him and looks at Zoe.

MAL
We'd do best to shut our mouths, keep our heads low, and see if we can't obtain ourselves—

A RUMBLE interrupts him as Book roars up in an OFF-ROAD VEHICLE with huge tires. The Shepherd looks none too happy.

MAL (cont'd)
—A vehicle.
(beat)
Shepherd Book. Didn't plan on seeing you so soon.

BOOK
I imagine that's right.

Mal climbs aboard.

MAL
Shiny ride, Preacher. Can we keep it?

BOOK
No, we certainly cannot.

MAL
So… How goes the flock?

BOOK
At the moment? To their homes. To fetch their guns.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – DAY

Wash sits in his chair, hands behind his head. We see him from behind.

MAL (via comm)
Wash?

Wash is asleep.

MAL (cont'd, via comm)
Wash, you hearin' me?
(beat)
WASH!

Wash wakes with a start.

WASH
Mother!

MAL (cont'd)
Wash, I am decidedly not your mother.

WASH
Right, but I assume you didn't call just to tell me that…

MAL (via comm)
Change of plans. Looks like we'll be leaving the world a bit sooner'n anticipated. I'd like that last statement to prove specific and mundane, not spiritual-like.

Wash leans forward, flipping switches, hitting buttons, and prepping the ship.

WASH
Gotcha.

MAL (via comm)
Go with plan B. And Wash…

EXT. CONSTANCE – SAME TIME

The off-road vehicle is pursued down a thoroughfare by an ANGRY MOB of townsfolk, some riding mules and other vehicles, some mounted on horseback. Those with ranged weapons fire at the crew. Jayne and Zoe are in the back, returning fire.

MAL (cont'd)
Hurry.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – DAY

SIMON TAM sits on a crate. We see him in the FRAME of a CAPTURE ("future camera"), looking straight at us.

SIMON
Really, Kaylee, I don't understand why you would even want my picture…

KAYLEE lowers her camera. She and INARA stand at one side of the cargo bay, Simon at the other.

KAYLEE
(to Inara)
All that schoolin', he's gotta ask.

WASH (via comm)
Kaylee? Kaylee?

KAYLEE
What's up, Wash?

WASH (via comm)
The usual. Crime and us trying to avoid punishment. Captain says go with Plan B. Ready to make like a kite?

EXT. CONSTANCE – SAME TIME

The crowd's drawing a bit closer to the off-road vehicle, one mule and a pair of riders on horseback almost pulling parallel.

MAL
Prayerful group you've found yourself here, Shepherd. And here I thought that book of yours had a thing in it about not killing folks.

BOOK
It does. Comes a bit before the one about not stealing.

Mal shoots the mule that's sneaking up on their side. Book glares.

MAL
What? Just doin' unto him as he'd a done to me.

In the back of the vehicle, Jayne and Zoe fire at those following them, more to distract than to hit.

JAYNE
Stop chasing us! We don't got your gorram money! Go chase the people with the money!

ZOE
Jayne, you yelling like that's only going to make them want to shoot you more.

JAYNE
How ya figure?

ZOE
Because it makes me want to shoot you.

MAL (into comm)
Wash, how's Plan B coming?

EXT. SERENITY – SAME TIME

Serenity hovers over a farmlike building on the edge of a river. The ship is next to and above a WATER TOWER, and Kaylee, strapped into a harness and wearing a hat and goggles, hangs from Serenity's underbelly, hooking the last of three CABLES to the water tower.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash sits waiting, hands on the controls.

WASH
You're a whisper away from us, Mal.

EXT. CONSTANCE – SAME TIME

Mal points at the water tower in the distance ahead. Serenity's still hovering over it.

MAL
You want I should take the wheel for this, Shepherd?

BOOK
Thank you, but no. I'd prefer to survive.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – DAY

Simon helps Kaylee up through the cargo bay doors.

WASH (via comm)
Kaylee, we ready for this?

KAYLEE
Almost.

She runs across the room, grabbing a railing, indicating that Simon should too.

KAYLEE (cont'd)
(to Simon)
Hold on. TIGHT.
(to comm)
Wash, we're good.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash concentrates.

WASH
Well, here goes… *Kan wuh-mun tzun muh suh bah!* <Let's see how we die!>

EXT. CONSTANCE – SAME TIME

Book drives the vehicle through the legs of the water tower.

ZOE
(looking behind them)
Gonna be close…

Serenity pulls away, tugging the water tower over. A TORRENT OF WATER floods the pursuers.

EXT. SPACE – MOMENTS LATER

Serenity sails away through the black.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

Mal, Zoe, Jayne, and Book are wet. Jayne looks miserable, and Book is clearly annoyed at Mal. Kaylee, chipper as always, hands out towels, while Simon lingers nearby.

MAL
(to Zoe)
You tell that husband of yours to set a course for Persephone. Badger said he might have another job ready for us after we get this datacard to him.

ZOE
We really want to deal with Badger again?

MAL
Don't have much of a choice, do we?

Kaylee hands Mal a towel.

KAYLEE
(brightly)
Well, that was the dampening sort of heroic…

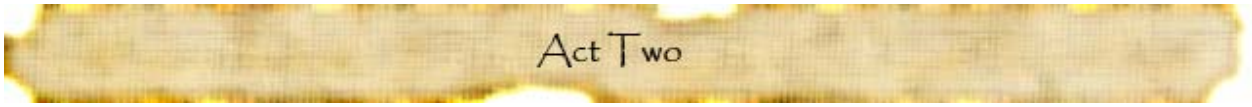
JAYNE
(drying himself off)
Gorram it, I'm wet like a diaper.

KAYLEE
(to herself)
Not how I meant it.
(to Jayne)
Don't be such a grouch, Jayne. It's a hard 'Verse out there. Ain't easy gettin' paid.
(beat)
We did get paid, didn't we?

Mal looks down.

JAYNE
Is now when, Mal?

Mal throws his towel on the floor and walks away.



EXT. PERSEPHONE – EAVESDOWN DOCKS – DAY – ESTABLISHING

Eavesdown Docks is its usual bustling self. Serenity touches down.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – DAY

Mal, Zoe, Wash, and Jayne are in the cargo bay. Kaylee, at the controls, lowers the ramp. Mal tosses a MOSTLY-EMPTY BAG to Wash.

MAL
Get her fueled, Wash.

WASH
With dirt? With cheap dirt?
(shaking the sad little bag)
That's about all this is gonna get us…

ZOE
(quietly)
He's right, Mal. I know you think that Alliance cruiser's still after us, but you've had us all over the 'Verse takin' jobs that don't hardly pay for the fuel these past few weeks. Since Inara…

Mal nods, not disagreeing with her, and turns back to Wash.

MAL
Get her fueled as much as you can. The rest of you are free to take a walkabout, do what you need to do. But be back on the ship come sundown… Promised Inara our next stop would be Bena—

KAYLEE
Mal!

A sinister FIGURE stands on the cargo bay ramp, near Jayne, backlit by the sun. Jayne turns around and decks the man without even thinking. As he falls to the ground, we see that he's a thuggish BULLY BOY.

KAYLEE
Jayne, why'd you go and do that?

JAYNE
He was crowdin' me, and I don't know him. I hit people that crowd me I don't know.

BADGER (OS)
It's quite alright, little lady…

There's a MULE that can carry a half-dozen men at the base of the ramp. BADGER stands near the mule, while four other BULLY BOYS get off and crowd around the base of the ramp.

BADGER (cont'd)
I don't like the man, which is why I insisted he go first.
(to Mal)
You 'ave my datacard?

MAL
You have my coin?

Mal stands a bit back from the top of the ramp, backed up by Jayne. Zoe quietly moves to stand near Kaylee and the airlock controls.

BADGER
(shaking his head and smiling)
Wasn't the deal, Captain, an' you know it.

MAL
Deal wasn't to have Ott and his waitin' on us either.

BADGER
'ad nothin' t'do wi' them skankin' your job. Could be it was them backbirths, Mingo and Fanty, turned 'em onto—

MAL
Then maybe I should be talking to them. Seem to make a habit of gettin' their crews the drop.
(beat)
I do the job, I get paid. You want the datacard, you get me coin.

Badger is not happy, but also not surprised.

BADGER
Tol' you I might 'ave another job, yeah? The take on this'll more'n pay for both.

JAYNE
Coin's coin, Mal.

MAL
(to Badger)
I'm listening.

BADGER
'Course you are. But just to be sure…

At Badger's signal, the bully boys head up the ramp, all menace and nastiness.

Mal doesn't even move.

MAL
Zoe.

Zoe, at the airlock controls, hits a button. The men yell, cough, and recoil as steam hisses at them from the airlock's vents.

Zoe hits another button, and as soon as the steam stops, Mal and Jayne are among the bully boys, punching and kicking. The fight is brief, and ends with Mal and Jayne standing and Badger's boys on the ramp, groaning in pain.

Mal looks down the ramp at Badger, who has his hat in his hands, looking contrite.

MAL (cont'd)
So… What is it you wanted to talk about?

EXT. PERSEPHONE – DAY

Serenity sails over the Persephone wilderness.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

Badger sits in one of the chairs from the dining room, Mal, Jayne, Simon and Kaylee in a half-circle in front of him. It is not lost on Badger that the chair sits on the cargo bay door set into the floor, or that Zoe is at the controls, out of his sight.

MAL
For someone who came here to talk, you sure ain't.

BADGER
(nervous)
Where are you taking me?

MAL
That ain't your concern. Now spill your guts. Or I might let Jayne.

JAYNE
(gleefully)
Oh, yeah.

SIMON
Do we really want to hear what he has to say?

Badger smiles up at Simon.

BADGER
'ow's your sister, doctor?

Simon takes a step forward, but Kaylee puts a hand on his shoulder. Badger laughs.

MAL
'less you got somethin' profitable to say, Badger, I think maybe we can drop you off right here.
(beat)
Zoe?

The doors below Badger open just a crack, letting in the rushing sound of wind. Badger reacts.

BADGER
(hastily)
Battle of Sturges.
(beat)
'eard of it?

MAL
Everyone's heard of the Battle of Sturges.

Badger's a little distracted by the whistling wind coming from beneath him.

BADGER
Bloodiest battle in all the war, it was.

A look passes between Mal and Zoe.

MAL
I'd hold it was a distant second. But go on.

BADGER
Shortest, too. All those lives—

JAYNE
Wanna hear 'bout coin, not some ruttin' history lesson.

Badger ignores Jayne, looking straight at Mal as he snaps his fingers.

BADGER
Snuffed in a blink.

MAL
(quietly)
Blink's an awful long time when you're on the ground.

ZOE
We're not requirin' a lecture on the subject. Or had you not noticed the color the captain and I are partial to wearing?

Badger turns around, craning his neck to look at Zoe, who stands over the controls.

BADGER
'ere's what you and the 'ist'ry books don't know, little lady. What the Battle of Sturges was fought for—what all them boys and girls died for—was a boatload of cash.
(beat)
A boatload of cash what's still there.

He turns to look back at Mal.

SIMON
This doesn't make any sense.

JAYNE
Sounds like a ruttin' fairy tale.

BADGER
Believe what you want. Stash is real enough, just sittin' there waitin' for you, or someone near enough you, to liberate it.

MAL
They're right. This don't make sense. What was the money doing there in the first place?

BADGER
(shrugs)
Word is the Alliance was plannin' to bribe some bigwig at Sturges. Try to end the war early.

ZOE
General Donovan?

He looks back at her, smiling.

BADGER
Not quite, luv. Donleavy.

Mal and Zoe exchange a look over Badger.

ZOE
Story's got the whiff of truth to it, sir.

JAYNE
Ain't all this story smells of!

SIMON
How do you even know any of this?

BADGER
When the fight started, the petty officer jumped ship. Took what coin he could carry. And the comm codes to get back.
(to Mal)
You 'ave the datacard, Mal?

Mal holds out the DATACARD, making as if to hand it to Badger. When Badger leans forward, Mal snaps the card back.

BADGER (cont'd)
Take you right to the ship, right to the stash.

SIMON
Captain, remind me, please, why are we even listening to him?

BADGER
All that coin, just waitin' for somebody, Reynolds…

Mal looks down.

JAYNE
Could be worth the trip, Cap'n. Just to be sure.

Zoe comes around to join Mal.

ZOE
What about competition? Other crews? Sturges draws scavengers like a carcass in the sun.

BADGER
'at's the int'restin' thing. Seems the Alliance's put on a push t'clear out the carrion these past few weeks. They've taken a renewed interest in Sturges. I'll leave it to your imagining as to why.

SIMON
Wouldn't we have to worry about an Alliance presence, then?

Badger ignores him, looks at Mal.

BADGER (cont'd)
Datacard'll take you right to it, Mal. All that Alliance coin, yours for the takin'.
(beat)
Less my percentage, of course.
(beat)
What do you say?

MAL
I say we're through.
(beat)
Even if you're tellin' the truth, we're done. I'll decide if I want to take this job, an' if I do, what cut you deserve. But I see you near my ship or my crew, you better be lost and walkin' th'other way.

Mal hands the datacard to Zoe.

MAL
Tell Wash to set down. I want this piece of *fei-oo* off Serenity 'fore the stain sets…

EXT. PERSEPHONE – MOMENTS LATER

Serenity sails away as Badger is left standing in the middle of a field, holding his hat so it doesn't get blown off by the wind.

MAL (cont'd, VO)
He's got a long walk ahead of him.

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – DAY

Mal, pensive, carries the chair Badger was sitting on and moves toward the table. He's startled to find River hiding under the table, arms around her legs.

MAL
River? What in the hell are you—

RIVER
Ball of yarn… All knotted and tangled with different weights and colors. But pull one string, you pull them all…

INARA (OS)
There you are.

Inara stands in the doorway, craning her neck to look at River.

INARA (cont'd)
I've been looking all over the ship for her.

River looks at Mal.

RIVER
You cheated.

INARA
(to Mal)
Simon asked that I look after her, and River was being so kind as to help me pack—

MAL
If it's all the same to you, Inara, now ain't the time to have this conversation. Again.

Mal and Inara stand facing each other. River's still under the table, looking up at them, like a child watching parents fighting.

INARA
Mal, I'm only trying to set a schedule for my departure. And while I can appreciate that you have a business to run, I must ask you to remember that I do as well.

MAL
Look, Inara, I'm gettin' you where you want to go fast as I can. Now, maybe it ain't as fast as you'd like, but Bena's not exactly next door and I've got to take what work I can along the way.

Mal steps around her and walks toward the door.

MAL (cont'd)
To be clear, I'll see you get where you want to go and understand that it ain't here.

Inara watches him leave.

RIVER
Let the ball of yarn go.

INT. WHITEHALL – WORKSHOP – DAY

As Renner and the others go about their business, Dobson takes a call at one of the comm consoles. Badger is on the screen.

BADGER (via comm)
Reynolds took the bait. Appeal to his greed, mention the war… Easy as cake.

EXT. SPACE

Serenity sails through the black.

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – NIGHT

Everyone's there. Mal stands at the head of the table. Book sits at the other end, arms crossed. Inara stands nearby, the only one not at the table.

MAL
As I'm sure you've all sussed for yourselves, we'll be taking Badger's job.

WASH
We've got barely enough fuel to get there, Captain, much less get away.

MAL
(nods slowly)
We'll siphon some from what we find there.

ZOE
Is this what we are now, Captain? Scavengers?

MAL
Folk at Sturges need it a lot less'n we do.
(beat)
Anyone got a complaint, they'd best know of payin' work to go along with it.

INARA
This is after you've delivered me to my duties, of course…

MAL
No, it is decidedly not.

She looks at him, her face unreadable, and he moves away from the table, taking a few steps toward her.

MAL (cont'd)
I can't wait on this, Inara, and running a taxi service don't feed mouths. For the record, job's the same direction you're so anxious to go and the only reason we're even venturin' to such a *shuh-muh gong tzwo do may yo* <without-any-work> corner of space is you.

Another step closer to her.

MAL (cont'd)
Still, I imagine you're upset and I want you to know I'm…
(beat)
That I wish things could be different. It's just a decision I had to make.

INARA
Yes. The only one you ever do.

She turns away from him and walks out.

Beat.

MAL
Anyone else has words, now'd be the time.

RIVER
I hate that color on you.
(beat)
I always have.

Mal ignores her.

MAL
If that's all, then—

BOOK
It's not.

Mal doesn't look surprised as Book stands.

BOOK (cont'd)
I think you should respect Inara's wishes, Captain. You gave her your word.

MAL
Yes, I did. And you think you're in a position to tell me what that's worth? It's air, Shepherd. Nothing more when it comes right down to it, and when the goin' reaches the right level of rough.

He moves so he's face-to-face with Book.

MAL (cont'd)
Come to think of it, ain't no different than the word you preach… Tell me, Shepherd, when things take a turn toward *gos se* <crap>, do you drop to your knees and pray, or do you steal a vehicle and do what needs to be done to survive? To live to repent another day?

Beat.

Book decks Mal. Hard, drawing blood, and knocking the captain back into the galley bar. No one sees it coming. Jayne is stunned. Kaylee gasps. Everyone stares.

Book walks out.

Mal wipes the blood off his mouth.

MAL
Yeah, that's what I thought.
(beat)
Wash, get us in the air.

INT. WHITEFALL – WORKSHOP – DAY

Dobson's folk pull open warehouse doors in front of the Tick, letting sun spill in. The Blue Hands are in the Tick's cockpit, and the engine is idling.

Dobson stands next to Renner, grinning like a madman.

DOBSON
Day's been a long time coming.

Renner nods.

DOBSON (cont'd)
I'll see you soon, old man.

RENNER
Make them suffer for me.

DOBSON
Count on it.

Dobson claps Renner on the shoulder and walks away, heading for the other folks.

DOBSON (cont'd)
Pack it up, boys! There's only one thing you need to remember. When we get there, I'm the one that kills Reynolds!



INT. SERENITY – INARA'S SHUTTLE – NIGHT

Inara packs, ostensibly with the help of Kaylee (who is busy pointing her CAPTURE at everything) and River (who wanders around the room like a cat). Inara looks up from the box she's putting candles into.

INARA
Kaylee, are you ever going to put that capture down?

KAYLEE
We gotta have records of everything. A bona fide Companion entertained clients on this very ship! In this very bed!

Kaylee aims the capture at the bed, which River is bending over and sniffing curiously.

KAYLEE (cont'd)
For one sweet second, we was almost classy.

INARA
You promised to help me pack.

KAYLEE
Honest, Inara, why do you have to leave?

Inara looks at Kaylee uncertainly, signals that she should shut the capture off. Kaylee deactivates the device and puts it down.

INARA
It's complicated.

KAYLEE
No, it ain't, 'Nara. Captain can be a real <piece of work> sometimes, but he really—

INARA
What makes you think the Captain has anything to do with this?

Kaylee just looks at her.

RIVER
Gone already. Left so long ago. Heart of metal. An iron shield.

KAYLEE
(to Inara)
Just talk to him.

Inara walks to the door.

INARA
I…

She puts one hand on the door, as if getting ready to open it, but doesn't move.

INT. CARGO BAY NEAR INARA'S SHUTTLE – SAME TIME

Mal stands on the other side of the door, his fist raised to knock. After a beat, he turns and walks away, heading toward the galley. Wash comes onto the upper catwalk, headed toward him.

MAL
Had your chance to whine, Wash—

Mal tries to keep going, but Wash leans an arm against the railing, casually blocking him. Mal stares at the arm.

WASH
I coulda took a lotta jobs, Mal. Could be piloting a cruiser. Full benefits, vacations… Plus, not so often with the death-defying.

MAL
Must not be very fond of that arm.

WASH
But I got this woman nearby, makes me do all manner of stupid things. Got me piloting this little rust heap and ducking pretty much everybody that's ever heard of morals. Just so I can be around her.

Wash takes his arm off the railing and looks straight at Mal.

WASH (cont'd)
This is an unhealthsome gig, Mal. It's stupid. But doing something stupid to keep the woman you love nearby, even for a little while… Well, that's the kind of stupid I don't mind.

Mal walks around Wash, leaving him standing there.

MAL
(over his shoulder)
Just fly the boat, Wash.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – NIGHT

Wash sits alone, plugs the datacard into one of the consoles. He flips some switches, hits some buttons.

Zoe stands in the doorway behind him.

ZOE
Hey, sailor…

She comes over, sits on his lap, hugging him.

ZOE (cont'd)
Got time for me?

WASH
Always.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – DAY

Book lies on the exercise bench, grunting as he lifts a heavy weight repeatedly. Jayne stands over him, spotting him.

JAYNE
Wanna talk about it?

Book single-mindedly pumps the weights.

JAYNE (cont'd)
Didn't think so.

INT. SERENITY – GALLEY – DAY

Kaylee's preparing breakfast when Simon walks in. She nods a greeting as he comes over to help, but there's just a world of awkwardness between them.

SIMON
I feel like… If I've done something to offend you…

She doesn't look up.

KAYLEE
Ain't that, Simon. It's just…
(beat)
Serenity ain't your home. Ain't never gonna be.

SIMON
Serenity's been like a home to River and me.

KAYLEE
(sad smile)
But you got someplace else you should be instead. Ain't here 'cause you wanna be, but because you have to be.

SIMON
That's not what I'm saying…

KAYLEE
Don't have to.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – DAY

Wash, sleepy-eyed, shirt unbuttoned, pilots the ship. Zoe, half-naked, slumbers under a blanket on the second seat.

Wash reacts to something in the forward window, hits a few controls, reining in the ship.

WASH
(to Zoe)
Honey, wake up.
(into comm)
Mal, rise and shine. I think you better have a look at this.
On second thought, I think everyone better get up here…

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – MOMENTS LATER

The whole crew is on the bridge, looking out the front window. Mal refuses to make eye contact with Inara or Book, and Simon tries to move closer to Kaylee, but she shifts away, putting Jayne between them.

JANYE
Gorram.

KAYLEE
Cap'n…

RIVER
It stinks like sex in here.

SIMON
Captain, what am I looking at?

MAL
The Battle of Sturges.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME – ESTABLISHING

The black above Sturges is filled with dozens, perhaps hundreds, of WRECKS of all size, shape, and color. The ships flip and spin lazily, a cross between a graveyard and a man-made asteroid field. Between the wrecks are smaller objects, including DEBRIS and CORPSES.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Mal stares at the wrecks.

MAL (cont'd)
More to the point, what's left of it. Zoe, Jayne, suit up. Wash, Kaylee, find us some fuel.

EXT. SPACE

A massive ALLIANCE WRECK sits in the midst of the spaceship graveyard.

INT. ALLIANCE WRECK – DAY

A dark hallway, lit by creepy red emergency lighting, which is flickering and dying a slow death. Debris and dust float through the hallway, gravity clearly not working properly.

An AIRLOCK hisses open, and Mal, Zoe, and Jayne, all armed, all in spacesuits, float through.

MAL
Wash, we're in.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash sits at the controls.

MAL (via comm)
Grav generators must be knocked out, because we're still floatin'. But breathin', too. Ship's still got atmo after all these years.

WASH
Well, we're just makin' like garbage…

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

In the shadow of the Alliance wreck, Serenity floats near a smaller VESSEL, tethered to it by fuel lines.

WASH (cont'd, VO)
A bit too convincingly, if you ask me.

MAL (VO)
I didn't.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash leans back.

WASH
Really, Mal, some of these ships, I think they're in better shape than us.

MAL (via comm)
A bit of respect, Wash… You're among the dead.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

The TICK is hidden in the wreckage near Serenity. It silently glides free.

INT. ALLIANCE WRECK – SAME TIME

Mal, Zoe and Jayne now have their helmets off, and float down a hall, pushing off against the walls. The interior of the ship is illuminated by their flashlights, as well as the red emergency lighting. They float into

THE MESS HALL

Where it appears a large battle was fought. The room is filled with dozens of floating BODIES (wearing both Browncoat and Alliance uniforms), WEAPONS, TRAYS, DECAYING FOOD, and other debris. Eveything slowly stirs and shifts.

Jayne looks around nervously.

JAYNE
All these folk. Alliance and Independents both.
(beat)
It don't seem right.

MAL
Let's get this done.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

The Tick glides toward Serenity.

INT. SERENITY – INFIRMARY – SAME TIME

Simon walks into the room, a small box of supplies under one arm. He stops dead in his tracks, startled.

SIMON
What the—

There's broken glass and bloody handprints by one of the medicine cabinets. It appears that someone smashed the glass to get at the contents.

Simon looks down, now noticing some blood on the floor.

He turns and follows the trail of blood (drops on the floor, and period handprints on the walls) with increasing urgency

THROUGH THE SHIP TO THE PASSENGER DORM

Where the door to the room he shares with River sits partially open.

INT. SERERENITY – TAM'S ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Simon enters cautiously.

SIMON
River?

River's in bed, bloody, surrounded by opened bottles, spilled pills and syringes.

SIMON
River!

She's so weak that she can barely lift her head. She rolls her eyes toward him.

RIVER
(weakly)
Simon.

Simon rushes to her side and begins to examine her.

SIMON
River what did you— Why did you do this?

He picks up one of the bottles, examining the label.

SIMON
This is anesthetic, River. This is a LOT of anesthetic.
(beat)
Why?

He touches her hair.

RIVER
Because they're here, Simon. They're here and I don't want to feel it when it happens.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

The Tick glides up underneath Serenity. The airlock/ramming set-up on top of the bridge makes contact with the Serenity's underbelly (specifically, the cargo bay doors).

INT. THE TICK – SAME TIME

The Blue Hands sit at the controls.

BLUE HAND#1
Airlock established.

BLUE HAND#2
Prepare to breach.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash plays with his dinosaurs as he talks into the comm.

WASH
Nope, no problems here.

MAL (via comm)
How we doin' on fuel?

WASH
Almost gassed up. Have her topped off long before you get back with all that shiny coin.

INT. SERENITY – INARA'S SHUTTLE – MOMENTS LATER

Almost everything has been packed up. Inara stands among the boxes, looking at a CAPTURE OF MAL. In the image, Mal stands, all mock-heroic, in front of the HOVER-MULE (this capture was taken during "The Perfect Sunset").

SIMON (OS)
Inara?

Inara looks up, startled, to see Simon and River in the doorway. Simon's carrying River, who has all the power of a floppy ragdoll.

INARA
My God, what—

Inara puts down the capture, and goes to him and they lay River down on the bed.

SIMON
I'm sorry to barge in, but River… She's had an… episode. I was hoping you could look after her while I run some tests.

They take a step away, both looking back at River in concern.

INARA
Of course, Simon.

SIMON
You'll hardly know she's here. She hasn't said a word since—

River sits bolt upright in the bed.

RIVER
BELLY!

She stands, looking first at Simon, then Inara.

RIVER (cont'd)
Not yours. Not hers.

Before Simon can grab her, she flops to the floor and lies there, rubbing her hands along it as if soothing a pet.

RIVER (cont'd)
Hers…

INT. ALLIANCE WRECK – BRIDGE – MOMENTS LATER

The Alliance vessel's bridge is large, possibly larger than Serenity's cargo bay. Again, it appears there was a pitched battle here, based on the number of floating BODIES and WEAPONS.

The red emergency lights flicker creepily as Mal, Zoe, and Jayne float in. Mal plays his flashlight across the room.

MAL
(to Zoe)
We where we need to be?

Zoe checks a HANDHELD DEVICE she's carrying, looking at the screen.

ZOE
Yes, sir. If you trust the datacard we got from Badger.

She points across the room, past the floating bodies. In the massive window, the wrecks of ships can be seen floating by.

ZOE (cont'd)
Storage locker should be over there.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

Simon, looking very agitated, and Kaylee walk down the stairs to the cargo bay floor. Shepherd Book is on the UPPER CATWALK, looking around.

KAYLEE
Don't think we'll find nothin' on Serenity's tum to get greasy over. I ran a full diagnostic last time we docked for more'n a day.

Kaylee and Simon head off in different directions. He moves toward the exercise equipment, while she heads closer to the airlock controls.

SIMON
I don't even remember when that was.

KAYLEE
Me neither, now that you…

She trails off, noticing that the CARGO BAY DOORS are open.

KAYLEE (cont'd)
(to herself)
Huh. That's funny…

She heads to the open doors, peering cautiously down. As she does, a FIGURE erupts from the open doors, grabbing her. She screams as the Figure picks her up with ease.

The Figure, Blue Hand#1, tosses her across the cargo bay, but she manages to grab onto his shirt, tearing part of the shirt with her as she goes.

She hits the floor. Hard.

ON THE UPPER CATWALK

Book rushes to the railing, and looks down to see Blue Hand#1 moving toward Kaylee. From his angle, he can only see Blue Hand#1's back, as the man reaches inside his jacket for something.

BOOK
Kaylee!

ON THE CARGO BAY FLOOR

Kaylee begins to pick herself up. Blue Hand#1's shadow passes over her, causing her to look up.

KAYLEE
(small)
Oh God.

Blue Hand#1 stands over Kaylee. Where his shirt has torn, we can see that he's wearing rubberized BLUE BODY ARMOR straight up to the neckline of his previously-buttoned-down shirt.

He has a RODLIKE DEVICE in his hands, its spicules extended. The device begins to hum.

INT. ALLIANCE WRECK – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Mal hovers over an open STORAGE LOCKER, looking in.

MAL
<That monkey-raping son of a motherless whore>!

The storage locker is empty.

JAYNE
S'pose I shoulda seen this coming. Better yet, s'pose you shoulda, Mal.

Mal glares at Jayne, but says nothing. He angrily pushes off from the locker, moving to the center of the room. Zoe and Jayne follow.

MAL
When I get my hands on that bastard—!

ZOE
Don't make no sense, Captain. Where's the payoff for Badger in lyin' to us like this? He's gotta know we'll come back—

JAYNE
Don't matter. Ain't no coin.

He looks at the floating bodies, more than a little edgy.

JAYNE (cont'd)
Ain't nothin' here but us and dead folks.

DOBSON (OS)
Funny…

Dobson floats into view, gun aimed at them.

DOBSON (cont'd)
I was thinking the exact same thing.



INT. ALLIANCE WRECK – BRIDGE – CONTINUOUS

Dobson's MEN, a half-dozen in all, bristling with armament and anger, surround Mal, Zoe, and Jayne, who have their hands up.

JAYNE
Uh, Mal, didn't you shoot this guy in the head—

DOBSON
No, you moron. This pound of metal grafted to my face, it's purely cosmetic.

MAL
What is it you want, Dobson?

DOBSON
You. Dead.

Beat.

JAYNE
Gorrammit, Mal. Why's everybody hate you so much?

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

Kaylee tries to crawl away from Blue Hand#1. Her nose begins to bleed. She realizes, touches her hand to it, looks at the blood, and panics.

Blue Hand#1 looms over her.

Blue Hand#1 is quite startled when Simon, armed with a meter-long FREE WEIGHT from the exercise bench, smashes it down on his hand and his rodlike device. The device shatters.

Before Blue Hand#1 can recover, Simon brings the weight up again, slamming the man in the face and knocking him back. Simon rushes him, hitting him twice more, and driving him back until he stumbles through the cargo bay doors.

Simon, in his rush to push Blue Hand#1 back, almost follows him, teetering for a beat on the edge. Then he recovers and looks across the room to Book.

The Shepherd has made it downstairs and rushes for the control panel, hitting the button that closes the cargo bay doors, cutting off Blue Hand#1.

Simon turns to Kaylee.

SIMON
Are you all right?

She nods, but looks as if she's in shock. Then—

KAYLEE
SIMON!

Blue Hand#2 rushes him from a corner of the cargo bay.

INT. ALLIANCE WRECK – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Dobson confronts Mal as they float among the decaying bodies. As he speaks, Dobson becomes increasingly intense and agitated.

DOBSON
You tried to kill me—You shot my freaking eye out—and dumped me to die. I might as well have. Law marked me as dead without so much as a search, and so I decided to stay that way. You made me a freak, and the only thing I've wanted since is to return the favor… An eye for an eye.
(beat)
I'd say that about covers it.

JAYNE
(to Mal)
Sounds fair to me.

MAL
Shut up, Jayne.
(to Zoe)
Second he shoots me, you and Jayne kill 'em all.

Dobson smiles and aims at Mal's head.

Zoe rushes the nearest of Dobson's men, grabbing him and throwing him between Mal and Dobson—

Just as Dobson fires and accidentally kills his own man instead of Mal.

INT. CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

Simon and Blue Hand#2 wrestle over the free weight, each using it to try to push the other. Simon's losing the fight.

Book smacks a button on the control panel then rushes to Simon's aid. On the far side of the cargo bay, the INNER AIRLOCK DOOR hisses open.

Kaylee has snapped out of her shock a bit, and rushes toward the comm.

KAYLEE (into comm)
Wash! We need to get movin'!

A POUNDING NOISE sounds from the other side of the closed cargo bay doors (which Blue Hand#1 fell through).

KAYLEE (cont'd, into comm)
Now!

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Serenity roars to life, jetting forward and snapping the fuel lines. FUEL sprays from both ends, hitting space and freezing into clumps almost immediately.

INT. ALLIANCE WRECK – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Mal's crew and Dobson's men shoot it out, both sides taking advantage of the floating bodies, debris, and other cover.

Dobson and Mal try to get at each other, but debris keeps getting in the way.

Zoe calmly guns down one of Dobson's men as he tries to get the drop on Mal.

Jayne grapples one of Dobson's men from behind and manages to pull his gun free enough to shoot the man in the back. Two of the other men open fire on Jayne, who whirls, using the newly-deceased as a shield.

Keeping the body in front of him, Jayne rushes one of his two assailants, shooting at him, but as he does so, the other gunman has a clear shot.

Before he can take it, Zoe shoots him in the head. Jayne turns to her and nods his thanks, then raises his gun at her.

He fires, taking out the man who was sneaking up behind her.

JAYNE
Missed one.

And, just like that, all of Dobson's men are gone and it's pretty much over. A body shifts, and Mal looks straight at Dobson.

INT. CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

Book and Simon, working together, have managed to force Blue Hand#2 back closer to the open airlock door.

Blue Hand#2 jerks away, keeping his hands on the free weight they've all been grappling over. He swings the weight at the two of them. Book is able to jump back—just barely—but Blue Hand#2 lands a solid blow on Simon's ribs. There's a CRUNCH and Simon topples.

Blue Hand#2 raises the free weight, apparently preparing to crush Simon's skull with it. Book takes advantage and kicks Blue Hand#2 hard in the abdomen, sending him back into the airlock.

BOOK
(to Kaylee)
Close the door!

At the controls, Kaylee hits a button and the airlock door hisses shut.

Almost immediately a HUMMING WHINE starts from the other side.

INT. ALLIANCE WRECK – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Mal aims his gun at Dobson. Dobson, sweating, looks back, knows he's humped.

DOBSON
Not again…

Mal shoots Dobson in the other eye.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash focuses intently on piloting the ship.

MAL (via comm)
Wash, we're headed back your way. Ran into a problem.

WASH
Oh, I bet I can beat it.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Serenity bobs and weaves through the wreckage, periodically scraping its belly against other ships, but the Tick clings to its bottom.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

The humming noise continues. Book looks through the AIRLOCK WINDOW to see that Blue Hand#2 has activated his RODLIKE DEVICE. Book and Blue Hand#2 stare at each other.

BOOK
Kaylee…

Kaylee has started to move toward Simon, who is curled on the ground, a bundle of pain.

BOOK (cont'd)
Kaylee, open the airlock door.

Kaylee stops, looks at Book, but he doesn't turn around. Uncertain, she moves back to the control panel.

KAYLEE
But… He'll get out.

BOOK
The outer door.

Book continues to meet Blue Hand#2's gaze. Blood starts to drip from Book's nose.

KAYLEE
That'll kill him, Shepherd.

BOOK
(quiet)
Don't call me that. It only makes this harder.

KAYLEE
Shepherd, I don't think—

Book whirls on her, roaring and ferocious.

BOOK
I'm not asking, girl! DO IT!

Kaylee recoils from him, but hits the button.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash is still flying.

MAL (via comm)
Wash, what's going on over there?

WASH
I'd explain, Mal, but I'm flying at *boo yao ming duh soo doo* <life-risking speed> through a mess of pointy stuff at the moment.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Serenity sails through the wreckage. Blue Hand#2 pops out of the front airlock and bounces against the ship before spinning away to bounce against other wreckage, clearly broken and dead.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash focuses on the controls.

MAL (via comm)
And why the hell're you doin' that?

WASH
Just lookin' for a good fit… There.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

Kaylee kneels over Simon protectively. She looks up at Book, fearful. Book looks away.

WASH (via comm)
Everybody hold on…

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Serenity rubs up against a LARGE WRECK, scraping off the Tick in a burst of sparks and torn metal.

INT. ALLIANCE WRECK – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Zoe and Jayne already have their helmets on and are ready to go, but Mal is still talking to Wash.

WASH (via comm)
All right, Mal. I scraped the tick off our *pee-goo* <bottom>. I'm headed your way now.

Dobson's body floats by.

JAYNE
Man could hold a grudge. I admire that.

MAL
Yeah. Let's get out of here.

Mal shoots Dobson again. Blood floats through the room. Zoe looks at Mal.

MAL
(shrugs)
Just makin' sure.

EXT. ALLIANCE WRECK – MOMENTS LATER

Serenity has pulled close to the Alliance wreck. Jayne and Zoe are already on Serenity's top. Jayne opens one of the hatches, while Zoe turns back for Mal, who floats through space from the wreck to his ship.

WASH (via comm)
Um, Mal?
(beat)
Can you hurry?

Mal touches down on Serenity and looks up.

The Tick, damaged but functional, dives in at them, the ships head-to-head.

MAL
Wuh tzai chien shr ee-ding ruh dao shuh-muh run luh bah! <I sure annoyed someone or other in a past life, didn't I!>

Jayne and Zoe are already inside. Mal dives for the open hatch, going low as the Tick roars overhead, missing him by less than a yard.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Serenity surges forward. The Tick, smaller, more nimble, comes around to pursue.

INT. SERENITY – UPPER HALLWAY – SAME TIME

Mal is finishing closing the hatch.

MAL (into comm)
We're in, Wash. Bit of advice—after you pull a tick…

Mal drops down the ladder to join Zoe and Jayne.

MAL (cont'd, into comm)
Step on it.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Serenity tries to escape, the Tick staying on her tail.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Wash looks straight ahead, hands on the controls.

WASH
Actually, Mal… I prefer to torch 'em.

EXT. SPACE – SAME TIME

Serenity winds up where it started, surrounded by floating CHUNKS OF FROZEN FUEL.

Serenity bulls through, and as the Tick follows, Serenity's waggles her tail and her engines flare. The Tick is caught and crisped in the deadly afterburn. Worse, the frozen fuel erupts like fireworks, buffeting and burning the smaller ship.

Serenity roars off into the black.

EXT. BENA – COMPANION TRAINING HOUSE – DAY – ESTABLISHING

Bena is a lush, beautiful and tranquil world of tall trees, beautiful mountains, and winding rivers. The Companion Training House, looking not unlike an expensive and well-appointed Buddhist temple, sits at the top of a cliff, a river turning to a crashing waterfall right next to it.

Serenity sits in one of the half dozen courtyards that double as landing pads.

EXT. COMPANION TRAINING HOUSE – COURTYARD – DAY

In Serenity's shadow, Inara hugs Kaylee. To one side of the women are a half-dozen COMPANIONS, to the other side, the majority of the crew. Mal is not with the rest.

Kaylee doesn't want to let go, and when she does, she's crying. Inara's eyes are damp, as well.

INARA
Life is about the journey, Kaylee. Our paths will cross again. I promise.

KAYLEE
Inara…

INARA
Please… If you say another word, I'll cry in a most un-Companionlike manner.

Inara smiles, and Kaylee laughs through her tears.

Simon comes forward to take Kaylee's hand, and she buries her face in his shoulder.

INARA
(to Simon)
Take care of her.

He nods. Inara looks at the crew, smiles, and walks

ACROSS THE COURTYARD

Where Mal is standing, looking out across a lush, green valley.

INARA
You're it, Captain.

Mal doesn't turn, so she speaks to his back. Her eyes are damp again, and there's uncertainty in her smile.

INARA (cont'd)
I've said goodbye to all the others, but I must admit that I've not found the words to do our… arrangement proper justice. Would you spare a lady the effort?

Mal starts to turn.

CLOSE UP OF MAL'S FACE

MAL
I'll miss you, Inara.
(beat)
I keep coming up with all manner of things to say, but that's what they all mean, it comes right down to it.
(beat)
I don't want you to—

BOOK (OS)
Am I interrupting something, Captain?

INT. SERENITY – DINING ROOM – NIGHT

Mal's not talking to Inara at all. He's in the dining room, speechifying to himself.

BOOK (cont'd)
Not that I know what that would be, you standing here alone in the middle of the night.

MAL
We're in space, Shepherd. S'always the middle of the night. What's on your mind?

BOOK
I'm leaving the ship.

Beat as Mal reacts. Book won't look him in the eye.

BOOK (cont'd)
Don't know where for just yet, Haven maybe, but it's time for me to move on. I thought you should be the first to know.

Another beat. Mal's not sure what to say.

MAL
Look, Shepherd, I'll make this plain… It don't matter to me that you hit me.

BOOK
Which is exactly why I need to be away from you, Mal.
(beat)
Because sooner or later, it won't matter to me, either.

INT. PERSEPHONE – BADGER'S LAIR

Badger sits casually in his lair, surrounded by four BULLY-BOYS. He looks up at WINTERS, a stern, competent-looking man in his early fifties, well-dressed in some sort of noble house livery.

BADGER
Way I 'ear it, me an' your boss, we got us a problem in common.

WINTERS
I find that very difficult to believe.

BADGER
Don't much care what you think.
(spits on the floor)
Just need you to take back my offer. Tell yer boss if we work together, seems t'me we can take care o' Malcolm Reynolds in no time a'all.

EXT. SPACE

An ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT hovers in front of the wreckage of the Tick, amid the spaceship graveyard above Sturges.

INT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT – BRIDGE

CAPTAIN CHIEN (last seen in "The Perfect Sunset") stands, looking out the forward window at the Tick, which is surrounded by four ALLIANCE SOLDIERS in space suits.

Chien turns and walks to a COMM CONSOLE, hitting a button.

CHIEN
I must admit, Lieutenant, I find this Firefly-class and its crew increasingly vexing.
(beat)
Report, please.

INT. THE TICK – SAME TIME

WALLACE, one of the space-suited soldiers, pokes his head into the battered and burned cockpit. He recoils as he finds himself face-to-face with a SCORCHED SKULL, all that remains of the head of Blue Hand#1.

WALLACE
No good, Captain.

INT. ALLIANCE PATROL BOAT – BRIDGE – SAME TIME

Chien nods.

CHIEN (into comm)
Very well. Recover the body and return at once, Lieutenant. With the independent contractors gone, we have new orders.
(beat)
It seems that this little ship has made some powerful enemies. We're to return to Sinhon for resupply, and to take on an Operative of Parliament.

INT. SERENITY – FORWARD HALLWAY – NIGHT

Mal leaves his room, walking toward the dining room.

ZOE (OS)
Captain?

Mal turns. Zoe is standing by the bridge door.

MAL
What is it?

ZOE
Got me a husband needs to set a course. Where are we going, sir?

MAL
Same way as always. Forward.

He turns and walks away.

INT. SERENITY – BRIDGE – MOMENTS LATER

Zoe stands behind Wash, her hand on his shoulder, as they both look through the forward window. He reaches up and covers her hand with his own, but there's a sadness on his face.

ZOE
At least we're still flyin'. That's something.

WASH
Sure.
(looking up at her)
But is it enough?

INT. SERENITY – COMMON AREA – SAME TIME

Jayne sits surrounded by his weapons, cleaning one of his guns.

INT. SERENITY – INFIRMARY – SAME TIME

Simon crouches by the medicine cabinet, cleaning the blood off with a damp rag.

INT. SERENITY – ENGINE ROOM – SAME TIME

Kaylee, covered in grease, pulls herself out from under one of the larger PIECES OF EQUIPMENT. She pats the equipment.

INT. SERENITY – BOOK'S ROOM – SAME TIME

Book kneels at his bed, eyes closed, praying.

INT. SERENITY – INARA'S SHUTTLE – SAME TIME

The shuttle is empty except for an ornate BOX in one corner and Mal, who looks lost and confused.

INT. SERENITY – CARGO BAY – SAME TIME

River stands dead center in the cargo bay, looking around in wonder. She turns around in a complete circle, then lies down, putting her ear to the floor.

RIVER
Forward.

She smiles.

EXT. SPACE

Serenity sails forward through the black.

BLACKOUT